



Solidarity
with Hugh & Tiga

Tiga and Hugh were arrested separately on Friday, April 24th 2009. Snatched from their lives and friends on an unremarkable Friday morning, they were each transported by Indiana State Police to the Pike County Jail in Petersburg, a small town in southern Indiana. Their bonds were set high; \$10,000 for Tiga and \$20,000 for Hugh; each sat in jail for days before friends across the country scraped enough money together to bail them out.

Certain details of the arrest warrants differ, but their charges are basically the same: 2 counts of misdemeanor intimidation, 2 counts of misdemeanor conversion, and 1 count of felony racketeering. **In layperson's terms: Hugh and Tiga are being accused of organizing theatrical office demonstrations and of being alleged leaders of an organization (or "racket") that opposes the expansion of Interstate 69 through Southern Indiana. The price they could be forced to pay for these "crimes?" 12 years in prison.**

Opposition to I-69

These targeted individuals aren't the only ones opposed to the construction of I-69 in Southern Indiana- different sources (including the Indiana Department of Transportation) indicate that 70-95% of Indiana residents are opposed to the highway expansion. Thousands of acres of forest, unique wetlands, karst features and farmlands would be sacrificed to the new highway, not to mention the increased air, noise, light and water pollution that a new highway would bring to the region. All of this would come at a monetary cost of nearly \$4 billion, for a project primarily designed for the mass transport of commodities on a continental scale.

Construction on the highway has been kept on hold for the last 20 years, thanks to sustained resistance by hundreds of farmers and other residents of southern Indiana. But while the economic crisis keeps the asphalt trucks on hold for now, state police have been keeping busy harassing activists who oppose the highway. At press time, about two dozen people are ensnared in legal drama due to anti-I-69 activities. Many are caught up in a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (or SLAPP), while others are facing charges or have served jail time for their actions against the highway.

The Green Scare

Nationally, dozens of environmental and animal rights activists have been rounded up by law enforcement since 2005. This phenomenon has been dubbed by many as the "Green Scare," an allusion to the 1950s Red Scare, in which dissenters were black-listed as communists and harassed by the U.S.

government. The initial round-ups (dubbed “Operation Backfire” by the FBI) targeted the most extreme wings of the environmental movement such as the Earth Liberation Front, and those caught up in the sweep have faced multiple life sentences for acts of sabotage that did not cause any injury or loss of life.

In recent months and years, the tentacles of this harassment have stretched out more widely. While the Operation Backfire indictees operated in secrecy, aboveground and grassroots environmental organizing is now being criminalized. With the passage of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), leafleting against an animal testing lab can now constitute terrorism, and the FBI claim animal rights and environmental activists are the No. 1 domestic terror threat. It’s clear now that the fear mongering directed against ELF indictees was intended primarily to set a precedent (e.g. creation of the word “eco-terrorism”) to be used against much wider circles of people, including people who will never be accused of property destruction or underground activity.

Responding to Repression

Public opponents of I-69 have experienced a continual escalation of government harassment over the last years, with organizers and community members subject to constant surveillance and infiltration, frivolous lawsuits and accusations of terrorism. In early July 2009, another Bloomington resident was snatched from his home and forced to submit his DNA and fingerprints based primarily on the accusation that he is friends with the defendants. Participants in civil disobedience protests have been routinely referred to as “terrorists” by the police and I-69 planners.

The charges leveled against Hugh and Tiga indicate the state’s desire to continually increase its capacity for repression. The state is seeking to normalize repression, so that people no longer even have to be charged with crimes of violence or property, only of association. By escalating the repression slowly, very few people notice as door-to-door leafleting (which Hugh is accused of) turns into a serious offense, and even fewer will think to say anything about it. It’s up to all of us to make sure that Tiga and Hugh don’t go to prison, to make sure the government won’t be able to kidnap more and more members of our communities.

How to Help...

I. Communicate. Rumors, fear and media chatter will continue to be an obstruction to the authentic communication and relationships we will need to defeat this prosecution. Tiga and Hugh don't live in some distant, unreal mirage (they live in Bloomington), and it doesn't make any sense to talk about this case as if it's mysterious or abstract. The charges against them are also directed against all of us, as a warning to anyone who goes about anything a little too intensely, as if there was something at stake.

Let's talk about this case with everyone that it affects. Let's talk about the repressive apparatus (police, courts, prisons, etc.) with everyone that is affected by it. In other words, with mostly everyone.

II. Strong friendships and intense connections are our best weapon against repression. Competent lawyers and an outpouring of fundraisers have helped us stay afloat so far. But in absence of strong community, charges like these will undoubtedly continue to be pressed against those who can be isolated and individually targeted.

The emotional and financial strain on our communities because of charges like these are inevitable. Each round of charges we face is a test on the strength of our relationships. We can choose to face this challenge creatively, or submit to the state's vampirism.

III. The plea for money is an especially hard one for us to make. We realize that, as many of us make a conscious effort to sidestep the rat-race and pursue different ways of life, this can also leave us helpless when it comes to navigating the maze of the legal system. Nonetheless, the fiscal costs of fighting charges like these are extremely high. The \$30,000 needed for bond was borrowed from dozens of friends, and lawyer fees are expected to match or exceed that amount (except we won't get any of it back).

Fundraisers are continually and deeply appreciated, but it might be disadvantageous of us to only limit ourselves to benefit shows and other tried-and-true strategies. Let's get creative.

For more and up-to-date information, resources, etc:
<http://mostlyeverything.net>

Letters, correspondence, and donations can be mailed to:

Support (or Hugh, Tiga, Etc.)
c/o The Future
P.O. Box 3133
Bloomington, IN 47402

If you need a name for a check, email freetigaandhugh@mostlyeverything.net

New posters and literature are constantly being made available- photocopy the pamphlet you hold in your hands and leave a few stacks around your town. Or, use your talents and experiment with new and interesting modes of disseminating information.